



Washington State Department of Agriculture News Release

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WSDA seeks to make TB tests for cattle a permanent rule; hearing set for June 22

OLYMPIA – In an effort to keep Washington state free of bovine tuberculosis (TB), the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) is seeking to make permanent an emergency rule adopted March 15 that requires all dairy cows and bulls six months of age or older to test negative for the disease within 60 days prior to entering the state.

“As a safety measure, since the emergency rule took affect, we’ve instituted TB testing of incoming dairy cattle and increased surveillance at slaughter plants,” said Dr. Leonard Eldridge, state veterinarian and head of WSDA’s Animal Services Division.

More than 30 other states enforce the same requirements. A public hearing on the matter is scheduled for 10 a.m. June 22 in Room 259 at the Natural Resources Building, 1111 Washington St. SE, Olympia.

The action is necessary, according to Eldridge, because of cases of cattle tuberculosis that have occurred in recent years in several states, causing them to lose their TB-free status.

“Introduction of TB into Washington would have severe economic consequences,” Eldridge said. “Because there is no effective treatment for TB in livestock, infected herds must either be destroyed, or the herd is placed under quarantine and tested repeatedly, destroying any animals that test positive.

Cattle TB is a contagious bacterial infection. Animals are contagious in the early stages of the disease. The disease is most commonly spread by inhalation among confined animals, such as in dairy operations. Since dairy animals are often long lived, infected animals can develop lesions in the lungs, lymph nodes and other organs. The disease is also contagious to humans.

Also under the permanent rule, dairy heifers and bull calves *younger* than six months of age being brought into Washington will have to be officially identified with an ear tag and will be restricted at a designated facility until they test negative for TB at six months. Younger calves may be exposed, but cannot be tested accurately until six months of age.

The only exception from the testing order will be dairy cattle from herds tested yearly under a TB-accreditation program, neutered dairy cattle being fed for slaughter, and dairy cattle headed directly to slaughter.

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